

The Daily Charge



Operation Iraqi Freedom II

"Telling the First Team's Story"

Monday, April 5, 2004



Photos by Spc. Andy Miller, 122nd MPAD

(Above) Col. Kendall Cox unfurls the colors of the 1st Cavalry Division Engineer Brigade at Baghdad International Airport. Yesterday's transfer of authority ceremony marks the beginning of the 1st Cav. Div. Sappers move into the Baghdad area where they will take over for the 1st Armored Division Engineer Brigade during Operation Iraqi Freedom II. (Right) Members of the 1st Cav. Div. and 1st Armored Division carry the colors during the ceremony.



By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cavalry Division PAO

Spc. Leonard Trevino from Headquarters Troop, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, prepares his 50-cal. machine gun before his convoy north to Baghdad. Trevino predicted a safe trip thanks to an unusual lucky charm.

1CD Convoys North to Iraq

**By Sgt. Christina Rockhill
1st Cavalry Division PAO**

Spc. Leonard Trevino of San Antonio, Texas knew they would be safe, because he was wearing his lucky underwear.

"I'm wearing my lucky drawers," he said. "They're purple with pink flamingos. So that means everyone on the convoy is going to be safe."

His fellow Soldiers from Headquarters Troop, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division nodded in unison. They hoped today was not the day the luck ran out on Trevino's boxers.

Today was the day the 1-7 Cavalry troopers and Soldiers from the division headquarters would make their move from Camp New York, Kuwait north to Baghdad, Iraq. Their final

destination would be their home for the next year.

The Soldiers had been training for this moment since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom when they had their first set of deployment orders. The troops were apprehensive about the convoy into Iraq but were prepared. They had been through the live-fire convoy training in Fort Hood, Texas and again in Kuwait, and they knew the risks, and the possibility that they would face enemy fire.

It was going to be a long few days. The Soldiers were up at 3 a.m. manning their vehicles, checking and double checking for maintenance issues and making sure their weapons were clean and ready for action. The first part of their trip would take them through Kuwait, to the Iraq

border. For now they were relatively safe, traveling through a "green" zone. This would be the easy part of their trip.

Although still in a safe country, the Soldiers were on guard. The first stop was a refueling station on the border of Iraq. The glorified truck stop was filled with garbage and overflowing port-a-potties, but none of this deterred the Soldiers, who were just happy to get out of their vehicles after a long day of driving.

The First Team arrived at dusk and settled in for the night. Soldiers scrubbed up, brushed their teeth outside of their vehicles and bedded down, inside, on top or next to their transports. The next day they would cross into Iraq, a country that has not

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Moving on Up: 1CD Hits Baghdad

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fully embraced the American Soldiers as a peaceful occupying force.

Early the next morning, the Soldiers performed the usual maintenance checks. One of the fueling vehicles in the convoy had a flat tire and was left behind for repairs. It would link up with the next set of vehicles and leave after it was operable. Despite the setback, the mission must go on, and the rest of the Soldiers left the station before the sun was up. The convoy commander briefed the First Team Soldiers the night before and told them about the risks; improvised explosive devices and small-arms fire. He told them they would have to be ready to "lock and load" and fire on the enemy, but they already knew this and were prepared. With muzzles of M16A2 rifles and Squad Assault Weapons hanging out of open windows, they began their journey.

The roads were empty when the convoy pulled out, and the first sight of Iraq was bathed in darkness. The houses were few and far between, but each lit window held the threat of a terrorist. Every person standing alongside of the road was suspect. Were they taking notes on the number of vehicles, checking out the American weapons systems, or looking for a weakness to spring on? The Soldiers had to anticipate that and gripped their weapons with

added fierceness.

Following the red lights of the convoy, the vehicles drove through the Iraqi countryside, leaving the quasi-safety of Kuwait. The next rest/fuel stop was four-hours away. As the sun started to rise, the Iraqi countryside was slowly revealed. Palm trees and small mud houses scattered the landscape. Iraqi farmers moved their herds of sheep and goats as they set forth on their daily chores. Some raised their hands and waved as the Soldiers passed through, but for most it was just another Army convoy passing through their quiet desert. Barefoot Iraqi children ran up to the road giving the Soldiers the thumbs up sign. They jumped up and down while waving and making an eating gesture hoping the Soldiers would throw out an American treat.

By the time the Soldiers reached the fuel stop, the monotonous hum of their vehicles paired with the afternoon heat had made it imperative that they step out, stretch their legs and shake off the urge to nap.

The fuel stop took longer than the Soldiers had anticipated, and they ate yet another plastic-wrapped field ration as they waited to make the final leg of the day's trip. A four-hour drive north would bring them to their rest stop for the night. The Soldiers were in for another night of cleaning with baby wipes and sleeping in makeshift beds. With just time enough to



An Iraqi vendor sells former Iraqi currency to Soldiers as they pass enroute to the capital city.

By Spc. Bryan Kinkade, 1st Cavalry Division PAO

catch dinner before it got dark, the Soldiers bedded down once again. The darkness was littered with multicolored-glow sticks that Soldiers used to find their gear and their bedding for the night. As the Soldiers settled, they shared their stories about what they saw during the convoy.

"Hey did you see that camel riding in the flat-bed of that pickup truck?" one Soldier asked another.

"Yeah, he was looking right at me," the other said. "I wanted to take a picture."

The next morning the convoy left at sunrise. This was their shortest journey, but the most treacherous. Today, they would hit Baghdad.

As the convoy moved north, the small mud huts in the desert turned into large concrete housing complexes on the city's outskirts. Even the small farmers were on their way to Baghdad, and they made the trip

along the convoy with their mule-drawn carts hauling their produce to markets.

As the convoy closed in on Baghdad, the Soldiers started to see Iraqi citizens with weapons slung on their backs. They knew they would see this. They also knew to be aware but not necessarily beware. It is common for Iraqi civilians to carry AK-47 assault rifles around town. A visible weapon does not always pose a threat.

The Baghdad road was lined with vendors peddling everything from produce to propane. Again, the children were barefoot and covered with dust, but this time they wore American-style clothing.

This was it, the end of their journey.

They had prepared for the worst, but thanks to their training, and Spc. Trevino's lucky boxers the Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division had a safe, uneventful trip.

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► Hunting Eggs



Keshaun Stevens, 3, collects eggs at the Bethel Assembly Church Easter egg hunt Saturday. Several Easter egg hunts were held around the area Saturday. More are scheduled for next Saturday. (Photo by Jerry Larson, Temple Daily Telegram)

Passover Starts Today

Today marks the beginning of Passover. Passover is the eight day observance commemorating the freedom and exodus of the Israelites (Jewish slaves) from Egypt during the reign of the Pharaoh Ramses II.

The holiday's name - *Pesach*, meaning "passing over" or "protection" in Hebrew, is derived from the instructions given to Moses by God. In order to encourage the Pharaoh to free the Israelites, God intended to kill the first-born of both man and beast. To protect themselves, the Israelites were told to mark their dwellings with lamb's blood so that God could identify and "pass over" their homes.

Central Texas High School Students Honored

From the *Killeen Daily Herald*

The sounds of feet stomping and hands clapping from the Maxdale Elementary School Tapestry Dancers kicked off Saturday night's LULAC Council and Foundation Banquet at the Plaza Hotel in Killeen.

Five high school seniors from the Killeen and Copperas Cove school districts were each awarded a \$1,000 college scholarship, and the newly established LULAC Youth Council 1030 was presented its charter.

Guest speaker state Sen. Gonzalo Barrientos, D-Austin,

said Texas needs to allocate more funds for higher education.

"Seeing these children out here tonight is what it is all about," Barrientos said. "Our schools need more state funds." Barrientos represents District 14, which includes Travis and Hayes counties.

Julia Villaronga, LULAC Council president, said the organization has raised \$15,000 for scholarships in the past two years.

"Tonight is what makes it all possible," Villaronga said. "These are the people who are going to be sitting in our seats in the future."

Jazmine Acevedo, a senior at Shoemaker High School and one of the scholarship recipients, said she is ready to go to college and make her dreams come true.

"People say college is one of the best times in your life, and I am looking forward to it," Acevedo said. "I plan on attending the University of North Texas to become a journalist."

Other scholarship recipients included Ania Gonzalez of Killeen High School, Gabriel Sepulveda of Harker Heights High School, Genevieve Gonzalez of Copperas Cove High School and Salwa Yordi

of Ellison High School. Brandon R. Johnson, 17, and president of the newly chartered LULAC Youth Council 1030, said the organization allows those of Latin American descent to rise above the hardships they have faced in the past.

Barrientos offered words of advice to the students being recognized.

"No matter how successful you are, you have to give back to the community," Barrientos said. "To see the children tonight dancing together in all colors is what America is all about."



By Pfc. Alma Barrus, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division gathered at Camp Black Jack to listen to a free concert featuring rock group PRC-77 on Friday night. The band, made up of former military members, takes its name from the PRC-77 radio used by the Army from 1972 until 1992.

Today in History April 5

► From historychannel.com

1859 Darwin sends first three chapters of *The Origin of Species* to his publisher

1862 Siege of Yorktown begins

1931 Fox drops John Wayne

1945 Tito signs "friendship treaty" with Soviet Union

1951 Rosenbergs sentenced to die for spying

1955 Winston Churchill resigns

1972 North Vietnamese launch second front of Nguyen Hue Offensive

1976 Howard Hughes dies

1992 Abortion rights advocates march on Washington

1994 Kurt Cobain commits suicide

TV GUIDE	AFN ATLANTIC	AFN PACIFIC	AFN Sports	AFN Spectrum
18:00	ESPNews Headline News (18:30)	Major League	NBA Fastbreak (18:30)	The Simpsons The Cosby Show (18:30)
19:00	60 Minutes	The World Is Not Enough (19:30)	Baseball Tonight	Buffy the Vampire Slayer
20:00	NYPD Blue		MLB Opening Night: Cubs at Reds	Law and Order: SVU
21:00	Without A Trace			The New Detectives
22:00	Headline News	ESPNews		Monster Garage

Scores



NBA:

Sacramento 99
Houston 94

Detroit 79
Indiana 61

San Antonio 95
LA Lakers 89



MLB:

Montreal 11
NY Mets 3

Cleveland 3
Philadelphia 1

Seattle 8
San Diego 7

Oakland 5
San Francisco 5